

**AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS**

Claim 1. (*Original*) A grip handle for an axially extending sports pole, said grip handle comprising:

a peripheral wall adapted to surround an upper end portion of the sports pole;

a support extending from said peripheral wall, said support and said peripheral wall being positioned and shaped to enable said support to provide means for transmitting an axially directed force to the pole with a proximal phalanx of a thumb of a user.

Claim 2. (*Original*) A grip handle for an axially extending sports pole, said grip handle comprising:

a peripheral wall adapted to surround an upper end portion of the sports pole;

a thumb support extending from said peripheral wall for enabling transmission of an axially directed force to the pole with a thumb of the hand of a user, while allowing a mutual rotation of said peripheral wall between the hand of the user and said peripheral wall about an axis extending through said peripheral wall.

Claim 3. (*Original*) A grip handle for an axially extending sports pole, said grip handle comprising:

a peripheral wall adapted to surround an upper end portion of the sports pole;

a thumb support extending from said peripheral wall for enabling transmission of an axially directed force to the pole with a thumb of the hand of a user, while allowing a mutual rotation of said peripheral wall between the hand of the user and said peripheral wall about an axis extending through said peripheral wall;

said peripheral wall extending along an axis ~~being~~ curved upwardly and away from the user, as the grip handle is held during the sport activity.

Claim 4. (*Currently Amended*) A grip handle ~~according to claim 3, wherein~~ for an axially extending sports pole, said grip handle comprising:

a peripheral wall adapted to surround an upper end portion of the sports pole;

a thumb support extending from said peripheral wall for enabling transmission of an axially directed force to the pole with a thumb of the hand of a user, while allowing a mutual rotation of said peripheral wall between the hand of the user and said peripheral wall about an axis extending through said peripheral wall;

said peripheral wall being curved upwardly and away from the user, as the grip handle is held during the sport activity; and

said peripheral wall is being progressively enlarged in a direction extending upwardly from said thumb support.

Claim 5. (*Original*) A grip handle according to claim 3, wherein:

said thumb support constitutes a proximal phalanx thumb support.

Claim 6. (*Original*) A sports pole comprising:

an axially extending upper end portion;

a grip handle at the upper end portion of the sports pole, said grip handle comprising a side wall and a support extending from said side wall, said grip handle and said support being positioned and shaped to enable said support to provide means for transmitting an axially directed force to the pole with a proximal phalanx of a thumb of a user.

Claim 7. (*Original*) A sports pole comprising:

an axially extending upper end portion;

a grip handle at the upper end portion of the sports pole, said grip handle comprising a side wall and a proximal phalanx thumb support extending from said side wall for enabling transmission of an axially directed force to the pole with a proximal phalanx of a thumb of a user.

Claim 8. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 7, wherein:

said side wall has an intermediate zone;

said support for the thumb extends so as to project from said intermediate zone of said side wall of said grip handle.

Claim 9. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 7, wherein:

said support for the thumb has a rounded convex upper surface so as to conform to a curvature of a surface of the thumb in engagement with said upper surface when a hand of the user is closed on said grip handle during use of the sports pole.

Claim 10. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 8, wherein:

said grip handle extends along a longitudinal axis; and

said support for the thumb is inclined angularly and rearwardly with respect to the longitudinal axis of said grip handle during use of the sports pole.

Claim 11. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 7, wherein:

said grip handle further comprises an opposite side wall, said opposite side wall being opposite to said side wall of said thumb support;

said opposite side wall has a zone with a convexity, said convexity of said zone of said opposite side wall having a shape and dimensions to be housed ergonomically in a palm of the user's hand in a closed position of the hand of the user around the grip handle, while the thumb of the user is engaged with said thumb support.

Claim 12. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 11, wherein:

said grip handle has either a right hand configuration for a right hand of the user or a left hand configuration for a left hand of the user;

said right hand configuration of said grip handle comprises, when viewed by the user, said thumb support extending from a left side of said grip handle and said convexity being on a right side of said grip handle;

said left hand configuration of said grip handle comprises, when viewed by the user, said thumb support extending from a right side of said grip handle and said convexity being on a left side of said grip handle.

Claim 13. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 7, wherein:

said grip handle includes a wrist strap, said wrist strap including an inner branch extending downwardly along said side wall of said grip handle, at least to said support for the thumb, said wrist strap providing said support for the thumb.

Claim 14. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 13, wherein:

said wrist strap surrounds the thumb of the user, at least partially, in an area of a proximal phalanx of the thumb and/or of a joint connecting the proximal phalanx of the thumb and a metacarpus of the thumb.

Claim 15. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 7, wherein said sports pole is a ski pole.

Claim 16. (*Currently Amended*) A sports pole comprising:

an upper end portion extending along a longitudinal axis;

a grip handle at the upper end portion of the sports pole, said grip handle comprising a side wall and a thumb support extending from said side wall for enabling transmission of an axially directed force to the pole with a thumb of a hand of a user, said side wall extending upwardly without an obstruction projecting outwardly from said side wall above said thumb support; and

means for maintaining a connection between a the hand of the user and said grip handle while allowing ~~a rotation~~ an unobstructed rotation of said grip handle about an axis different from said longitudinal axis.

Claim 17. (*Currently Amended*) A sports pole comprising:

an upper end portion extending along a longitudinal axis;

a grip handle at the upper end portion for gripping with a hand of a user, said grip

handle comprising a first side wall and a second side wall, and a thumb support extending from said first side wall for enabling transmission of an axially directed force to the pole with a thumb of the hand of a user, said first side wall extending upwardly without an obstruction projecting outwardly from said side wall above said thumb support; and

a strap for connecting the hand of a user to said grip handle while allowing a ~~mutual rotation~~ an unobstructed mutual rotation between the hand of the user and said grip handle.

Claim 18. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 17, wherein:

said strap is connected to said grip handle by means of a pivotal connection for facilitating said mutual rotation between the hand of the user and said grip handle from a beginning of an impulse phase on the sports pole, whereby the hand of the user is closed on said grip handle, to an end of the impulse phase on the sports pole, whereby the hand of the user is not closed on said grip handle.

Claim 19. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 17, wherein:

said thumb support constitutes a proximal phalanx thumb support.

Claim 20. (*Original*) A sports pole according to claim 17, wherein said sports pole is a ski pole.

Claim 21. (*New*) A sports pole according to claim 6, wherein:

said thumb support includes an upwardly facing surface to be engaged with the proximal phalanx of the user's thumb for exerting said axially directed force.

Claim 22. (*New*) A grip handle according to claim 1, wherein:

said means comprises means for transmitting an axially directed force to the pole with a proximal phalanx of a thumb of a user as the user's hand is closed upon the grip handle during use of the pole.

Claim 23. (*New*) A sports pole according to claim 6, wherein:

said grip handle and said support are positioned and shaped to enable said support to provide means for transmitting an axially directed force to the pole with a proximal phalanx of a thumb of a user when the user's hand is closed upon said grip handle during use of the sports pole.

Claim 24. (*New*) A sports pole according to claim 7, wherein:

said grip handle comprises a side wall and a proximal phalanx thumb support extending from said side wall for enabling transmission of an axially directed force to the pole with a proximal phalanx of a thumb of a user when the user's hand is closed upon said grip handle during use of the sports pole.

Claim 25. (*New*) A grip handle according to claim 1, wherein:

said support has a width, extending along said peripheral wall, sufficient to support only the proximal phalanx of the thumb of the user.

Claim 26. (*New*) A sports pole according to claim 6, wherein:

said support has a width, extending along said peripheral wall, sufficient to support only the proximal phalanx of the thumb of the user.

Claim 27. (*New*) A sports pole according to claim 7, wherein:

said proximal phalanx support has a width, extending along said side wall, sufficient to support only the proximal phalanx of the thumb of the user.

Claim 28. (*New*) A grip handle according to claim 1, wherein:

said means comprises a thumb support surface extending away from said side wall along a substantially straight line to a remote end of the thumb support surface.

Claim 29. (*New*) A grip handle according to claim 2, wherein:

the thumb support comprises a thumb support surface extending away from said peripheral wall along a substantially straight line to a remote end of the thumb support.



Claim 30. (*New*) A grip handle according to claim 3, wherein:

the thumb support comprises a thumb support surface extending away from said peripheral wall along a substantially straight line to a remote end of the thumb support.

Claim 31. (*New*) A grip handle according to claim 2, wherein:

said peripheral wall extending upwardly without an obstruction projecting outwardly from said peripheral wall above said thumb support.

Claim 32. (*New*) A grip handle according to claim 3, wherein:

said peripheral wall extending upwardly without an obstruction projecting outwardly from said peripheral wall above said thumb support.

Claim 33. (*New*) A sports pole according to claim 6, wherein:

said support comprises a thumb support surface extending away from said side wall along a substantially straight line to a remote end of the support.

Claim 34. (*New*) A sports pole according to claim 7, wherein:

the proximal phalanx thumb support comprises a surface extending away from said side wall along a substantially straight line to a remote end of the proximal phalanx thumb support.

Claim 35. (*New*) A sports pole according to claim 6, wherein:

said side wall extends upwardly without an obstruction projecting outwardly from said side wall above said support.

Claim 36. (*New*) A sports pole according to claim 7, wherein:

said side wall extends upwardly without an obstruction projecting outwardly from said side wall above said proximal phalanx thumb support.

Claim 37. (*New*) A sports pole comprising:

an upper end portion extending along a longitudinal axis;

a grip handle at the upper end portion of the sports pole, said grip handle comprising a side wall and a thumb support extending from said side wall for enabling transmission of an axially directed force to the pole with a thumb of a user; and

means for maintaining a connection between a hand of the user and said grip handle and for maintaining support of the thumb of the user on said thumb support, while allowing an unobstructed rotation of said grip handle about an axis different from said longitudinal axis.

Claim 38. (*New*) A sports pole comprising:

an upper end portion extending along a longitudinal axis;

a grip handle at the upper end portion for gripping with a hand of a user, said grip

handle comprising a first side wall and a second side wall, and a thumb support extending from said first side wall for enabling transmission of an axially directed force to the pole with a thumb of the hand of a user; and

a strap for connecting the hand of a user to said grip handle and for maintaining support of the thumb of the hand of the user on the thumb support, while allowing an unobstructed mutual rotation between the hand of the user and said grip handle.